THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Yes. Sir. The Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference was held from 13-18 December, 2005 at Hong Kong. This Ministerial Conference discussed among other issues, issues relating to reduction of domestic supports, elimination of export subsidies, sensitive products, special products and special safeguard mechanism in agriculture; elimination of export subsidies and accelerated reduction of domestic support in cotton; non-agricultural market access; services; development package for least developed countries and other development issues under the Doha Work Programme.

The decisions taken at the Ministerial Conference are reflected in the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Ministers on 18th December, 2005. Copies of the Ministerial Declaration have been placed in the Parliament Library.

(c) The Hong Kong Ministerial Conference resolved that there would be effective cuts in trade distorting domestic support consistent with the July Framework Agreement of the WTO adopted on 1st August, 2004. Further, it was resolved that parallel elimination of all forms of export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect would be completed by the end of 2013, with a substantial part being eliminated half-way through. The developing countries will have the flexibility to self-designate an appropriate number of tariff lines as Special Products guided by indicators based on the criteria of food security, livelihood security and rural development. Developing country members will also have the right to have recourse to a Special Safeguard Mechanism based on import quantity and price triggers, with precise arrangements to be further defined to protect them against surge in imports or sudden decline in prices of agriculture commodities.

Grievances of SEZ Developers

1643. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether some developers have complained that the concept of single-window clearance with regard to SEZ is highly diluted and far from ideal, although the Development Commissioner has been given power,

but he does not have full jurisdiction and authorities such as sales tax, provident fund, etc. to intervence in these matters;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government propose to take to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) SEZ Act/Rules envisage that State Governments shall endeavour to provide single point clearance system to the developer and the units. The constitution of the Approval Committee with the representatives of the State Government is expected to enable single window clearance, provided the State Governments delegate necessary powers to the nominees on the Approval Committee. In so far as subsequent compliance issues are concerned, the statutory provisions of the Provident Fund Act, the Sales Tax Act, etc. will have to be complied with by the units and the developer.

Extension of Advantages for units of Software Technology Parks of India

1644. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state whether National Association of Software and Services Companies have demanded extension of advantages for units in Software Technology Parks of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): Yes, Sir. The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASCOM) have requested for continuation of the Income Tax Exemption for units in the Software Technology Parks (STPs). At present, the benefit is available for exports effected upto 31st March, 2009, only.

Ratification of SAFTA

1645.SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether all the member countries have ratified Sourt Asian Free Trade Area and if not, which countries have not yet ratified the same; and